ISSN 0712-7774

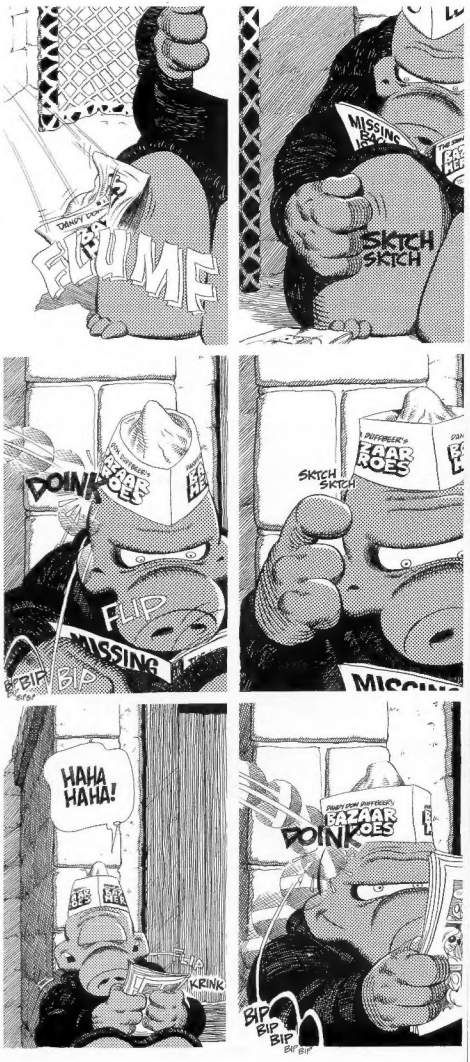
$2.25USA • $2.75CANADA • £1.25UK

CEREBUS GUYS

no. 9

ISSUES?
WELL WHAT THE @!*## DO YOU EXPECT US TO DO ABOUT IT?
I MEAN, THE WHOLE DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM IS GOING TO HELL IN A HANDCART! YOU'D THINK IT WOULDN'T BE ENOUGH TO JUST PUT THESE THINGS OUT ON TIME, BUT NOoooo...
SO! STARTING THIS ISSUE
DANDY DON
THE STUNNING FEATURE OF THE WONDROUS
BAZAAR HEROES
WALKER
WHEN TITANS WANK!

209
AUG



CEREBUS

NO. 209 AUGUST 1996

DAVE SIM
Creator, Writer, Characters/ pencil & ink, lettering

GERHARD
Background Artist/pencil & ink, cover colourist, mechanical tones

CAROL WEST
Administrative Assistant

DIANA SCHUTZ
Proofreading

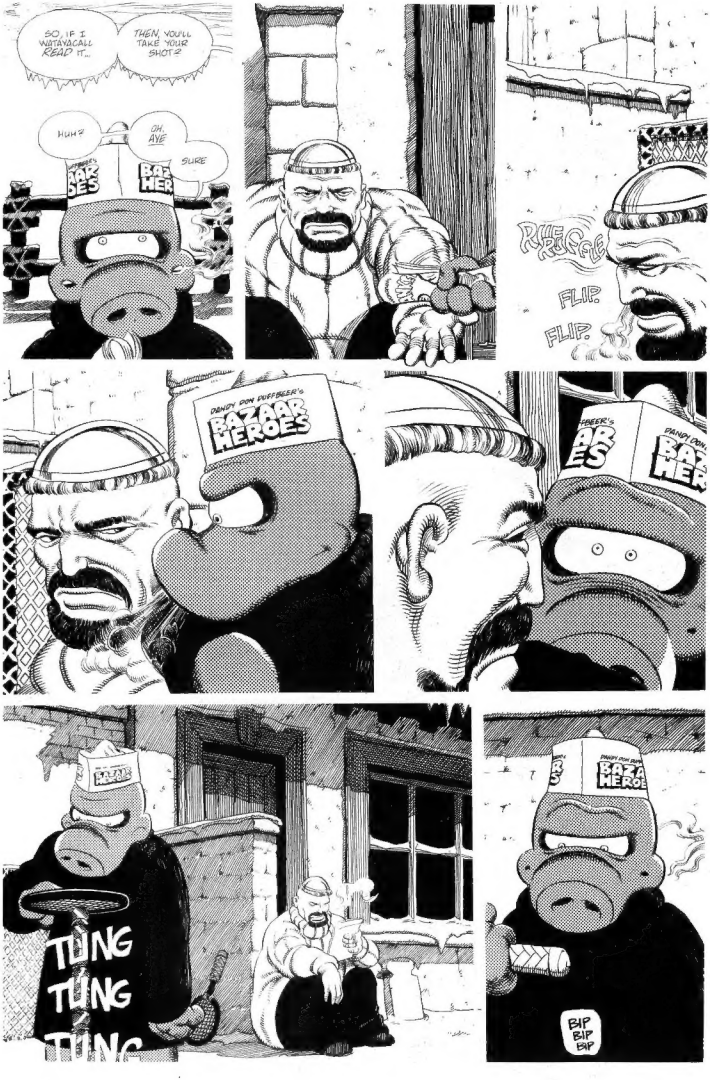
GUYS
a novel
•
(Cerebus 201 to Cerebus 219)

MONTHLY

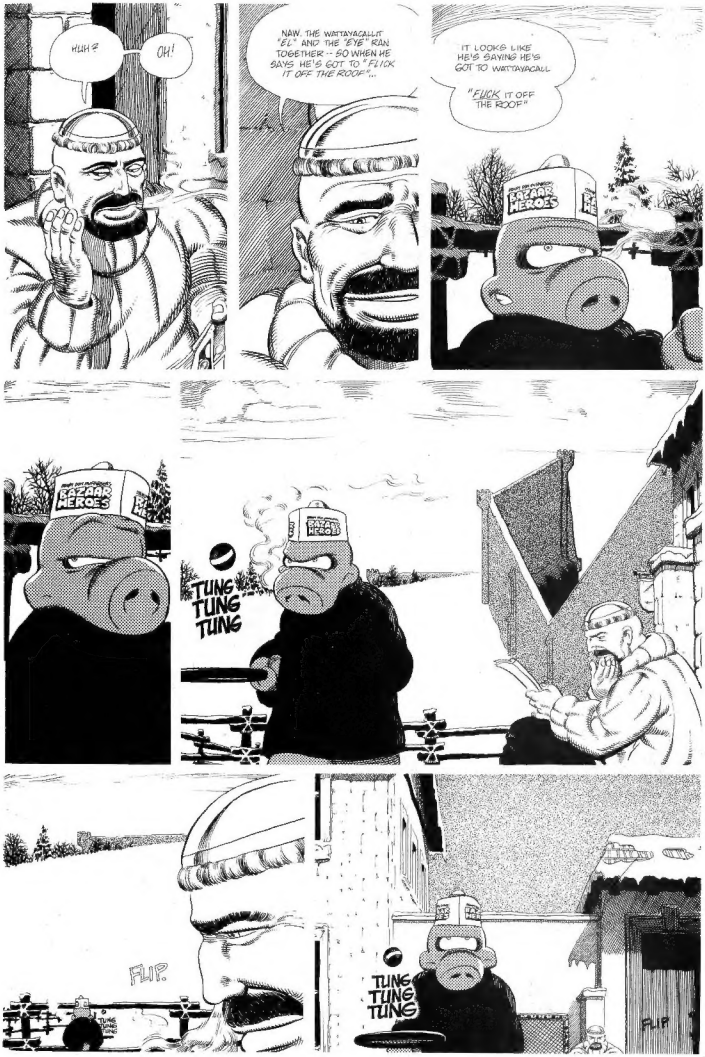
ALL CONTENTS ©1996 DAVE SIM AND GERHARD

PRINTED IN CANADA by PRENEY PRINT & LITHO, WINDSOR, ONTARIO

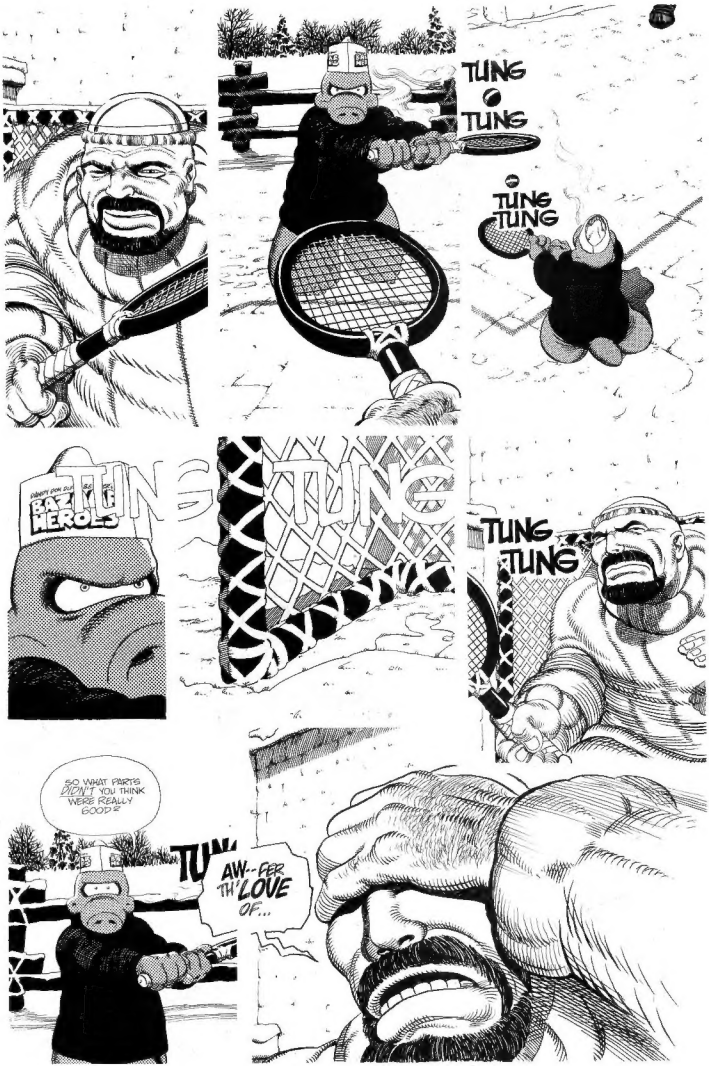
TWOK!
BIP
BIP
BIP
WOW.
THAT WAS REALLY GOOD.
OKAY-- IT'S WATTYAGACALL YOUR SHOT
YOU HAFTA BEAT FOUR-FER-FIVE...
MISSING BACK ISSUES
YOU'VE GOT TO READ THIS...
WHAT'S RIGHT WATTYAGACALL IT NOW?
AYE!...
TUNG TUNG TUNG
C'MON! IT'LL ONLY TAKE A FEW WATTYAGACALL MINUTES
IT'S REALLY, REALLY GOOD.
TWOK!
BIP
BIP

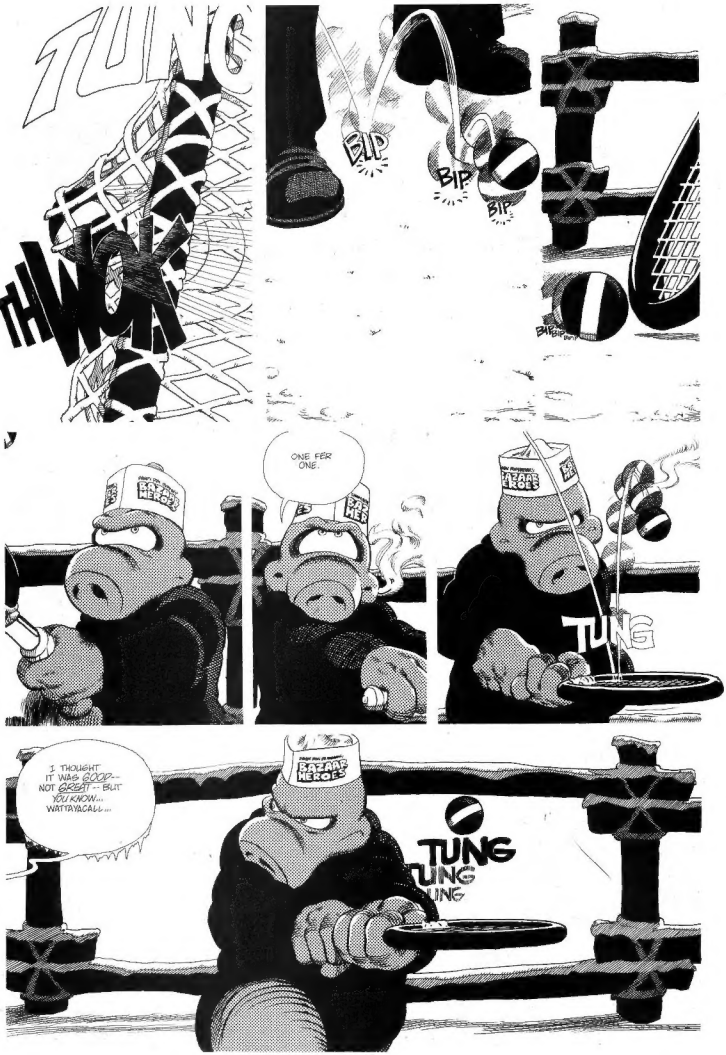

SO, IF I WOTAYACALL READ IT...
THEN, YOU'LL TAKE YOUR SHOT?
HUH?
OH, AYE
SURE
FLIP.
FLIP.
DANDY DON DUFFBEER'S
BAZAAR HEROES
TÜNG
TÜNG
TÜNG
BIP
BIP
BIP

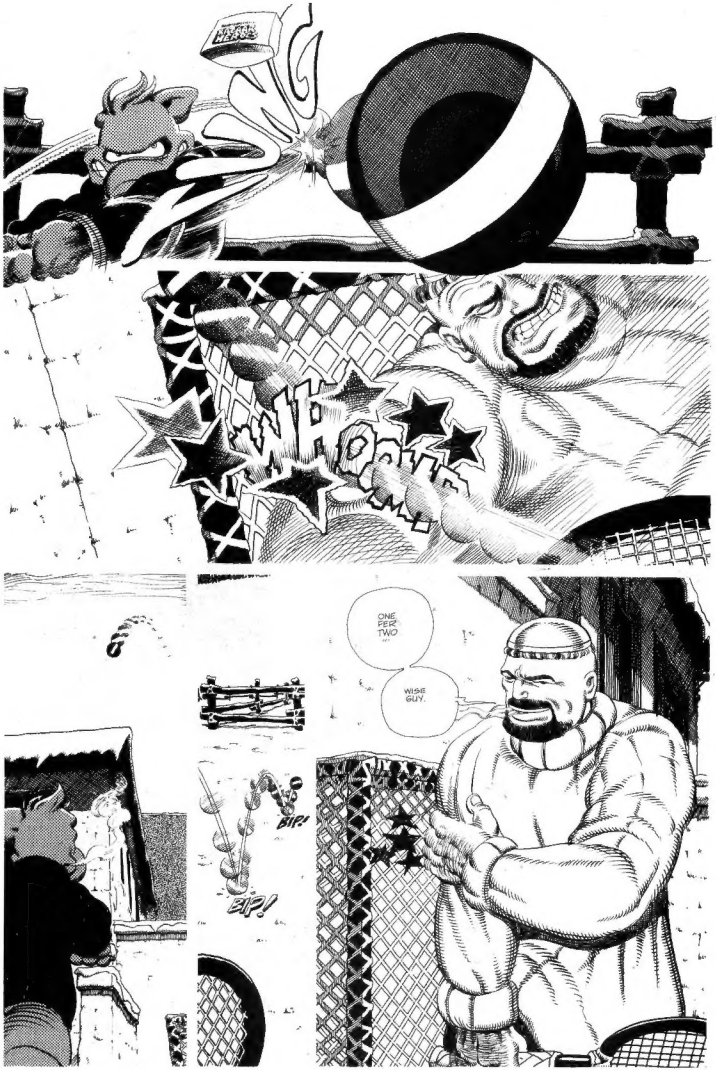
THWIP!
THWIPP!
THWIP!
HAHAHAHA
TH--
THE PART ABOUT AUNT POLLY'S APPLE PIE?

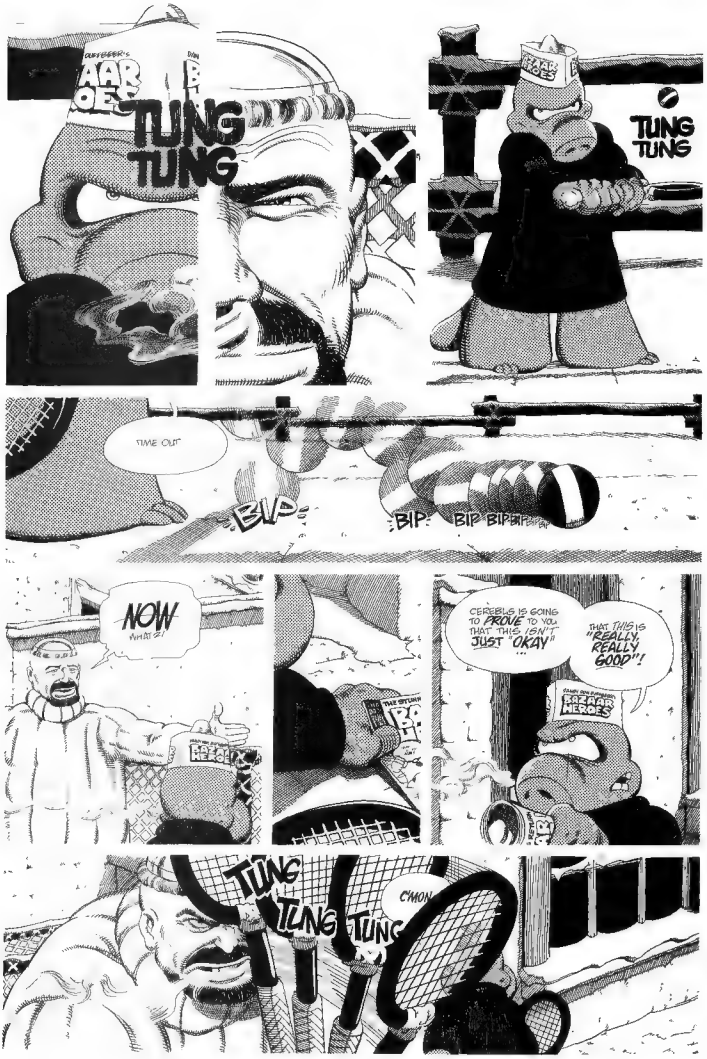

HUH?
OH!
NAW, THE WATTAYACALL'T "EL" AND THE "EYE" RAN TOGETHER -- SO WHEN HE SAYS HE'S GOT TO "FUCK IT OFF THE ROOF"...
IT LOOKS LIKE HE'S SAYING HE'S GOT TO WATTAYACALL
"FUCK IT OFF THE ROOF"
BAZAAR HEROES
TUNG TUNG TUNG
FLIP.
TUNG TUNG TUNG
FLIP

YEAH! THAT WAS OKAY!
SLAP
NOW! IT'S YOUR...
"OKAY"?!
JUST "OKAY"?!
YEAH..... "OKAY"
AS IN, WATTAYACALL "GOOD"
AS IN "I LIKED IT"
CEREBUS THOUGHT IT WAS REALLY, REALLY GOOD.
YOU SAID IF I READ ...
CEREBUS IS PICKING UP THE BALL
LOOK! SEE?
CEREBUS IS ALL SET


TUNG
TUNG
TUNG
TUNG
TUNG
TUNG
TUNG
TUNG
SO WHAT PARTS DIDN'T YOU THINK WERE REALLY GOOD?
AW-- FER TH' LOVE OF...


TUNG
THWOK
BIP
BIP
BIP
ONE FER ONE.
TUNG
I THOUGHT IT WAS GOOD... NOT BRIGHT - BUT YOU KNOW... WATTAYACALL...
TUNG
TUNG
TUNG


HEROES
WHOOSH
ONE PER TWO ...
WISE GUY.
BIP!
BIP!

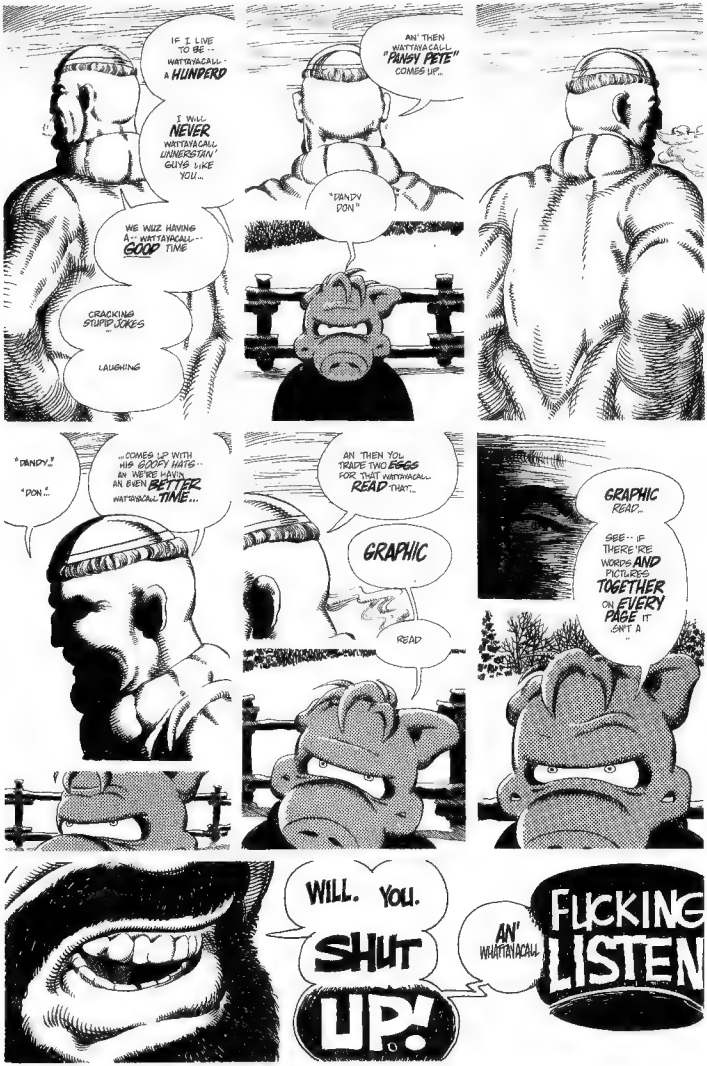

TUNG TUNG
TUNG TUNG
TIME OUT
BIP
BIP BIP BIP
NOW
WHAT?!
CEREBUS IS GOING TO PROVE TO YOU THAT THIS ISN'T JUST "OKAY"...
THAT THIS IS "REALLY, REALLY GOOD"!
TUNG TUNG TUNG
C'MON

HAHAHAHAHA
ERE 'ERE 'ARR SON
HAHAHAHAHA
DAT YO' WANK FLOWID WANK BETTA THAN YOW E WAH THOT BT WOOD?
HAHAHAHAHA
OO AYE.
TH' SECRET'S OUR IN ME NYEW FANGLED NOZZLE
HAHAHAHAHA
THESS AIN'T FIRE!!
UNNAME WANK FLOWDEZ STOCK GOT TO POOL TH' NOZZLE SOOST RIGHT AN ...
THWIP THWIP ...
HAHAHAHAHA
THWIP THWIP
HAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA

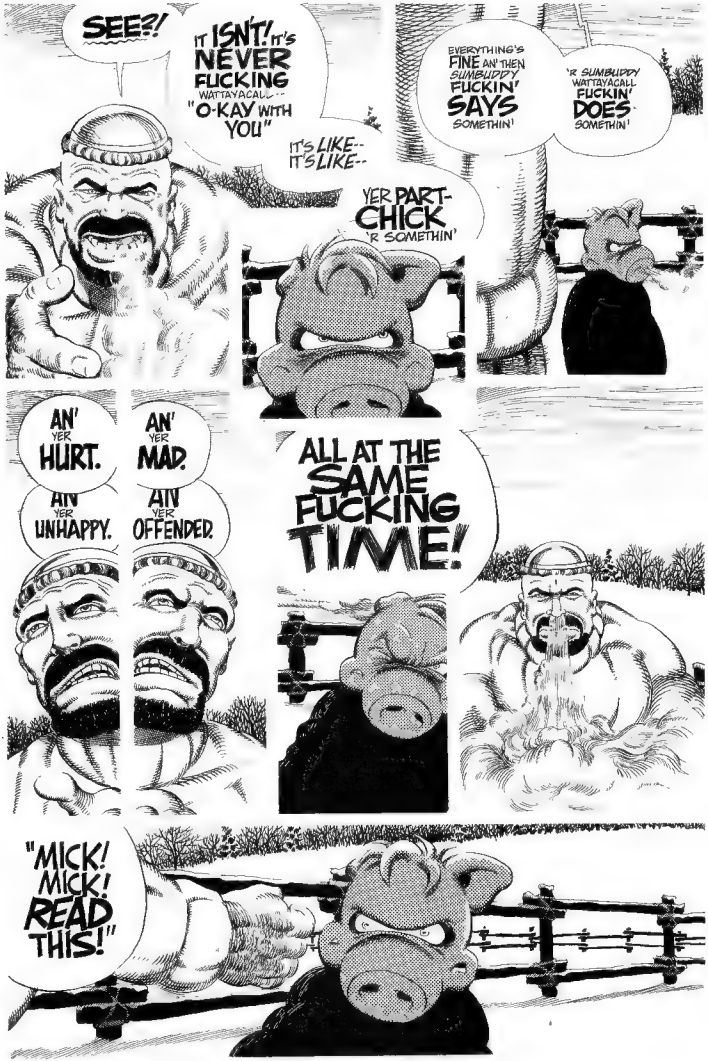
OY! BEAH --?
YOW PINT FINK VISS WUZ FUNNY?
HAHAHA HA HA HA
WHH..
RAPE
THUMP
STOMPSTOMPST
HAHA "THWIP THWIP"
HEEHEEHEE
STOMPSTOMPSTOMP
CLIK KLAK
I GUESS I DON'T HAVE A WATTAYACALL WHINEY DEVELOPED SENSE OF WATTAYACALL HUMOUR
OY GASS NALIGH, AYE?
VISSTZ FUGEEN' 'ISSTERRY COE!
HEH
THESS PAHT! THESS PAHT!
"WHEN I THENK OOV WOOT WOOD 'APPEN EF MY WANK FLOWID FELL ENTA TH' WRONG 'ANDS."
HOO BOY.
HAHAHAAH
HAHAH
HAHAHAHA

HAHAHAHA
CLIK
RIP
RIP
RIP
RIP
RIP
RIP
SKITCH-SKITCH
HUNH!
HUNH!
I WATTAYACALL SWEAR TO YOU I DID NOT WATTAYACALL... KNOW...
WHAT WATTAYACALL... "WANKING" MEANT IN WATTAYACALL T'CAPMIN SLANG...

SHIT
YOU ARE SUCH A--
SUCH A--A
AN ASSHOLE
AYE! FOR BEING SUCH AN ASS-HOLE! AAALWAYS THINKING OF
SUCH A..

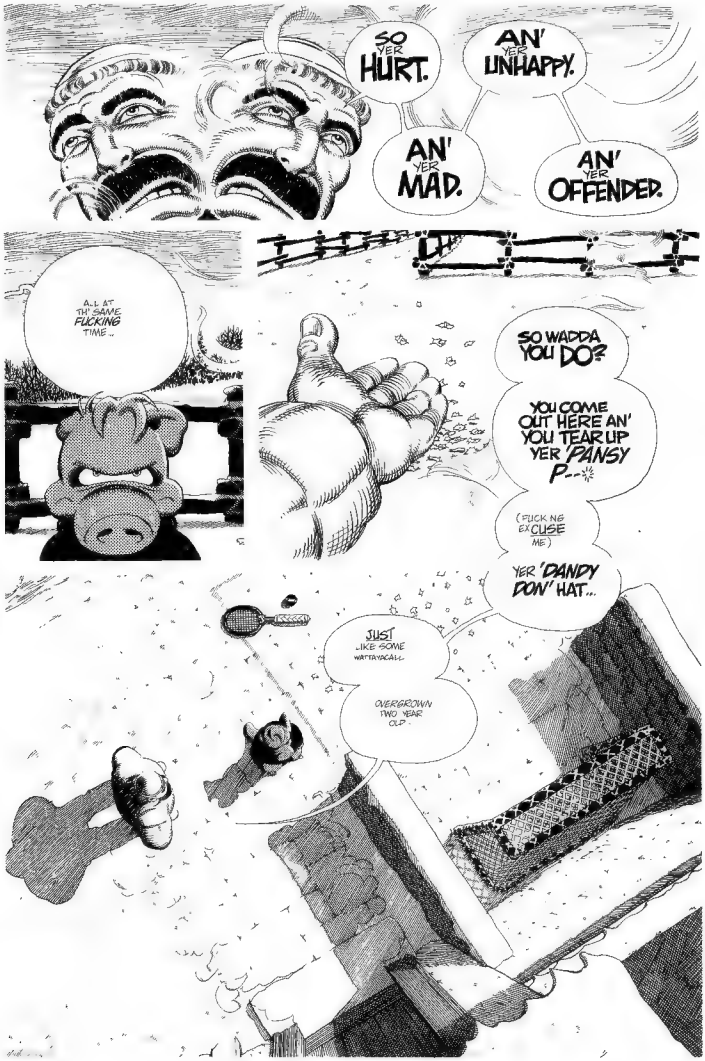

IF I LIVE TO BE-- WHATTAYACALL-- A HUNDERD
I WILL NEVER WHATTAYACALL UNNERSTAIN' GUYS LIKE YOU...
WE WUZ HAVING A-- WHATTAYACALL-- GOOD TIME
CRACKING STUPID JOKES
LAUGHING
AN' THEN WHATTYACALL "PANSY PETE" COMES UP...
"DANDY DON"
"DANDY."
"DON."
...COMES UP WITH HIS GOOFY HATS-- AN WE'RE HAVIN AN EVEN BETTER WHATTAYACALL TIME...
AN' THEN YOU TRADE TWO EGGS FOR THAT WHATTAYACALL READ THAT...
GRAPHIC
READ
GRAPHIC READ... SEE-- IF THERE'RE WORDS AND PICTURES TOGETHER ON EVERY PAGE IT ISN'T A
WILL. YOU. SHUT UP!
AN' WHATTAYACALL FUCKING LISTEN

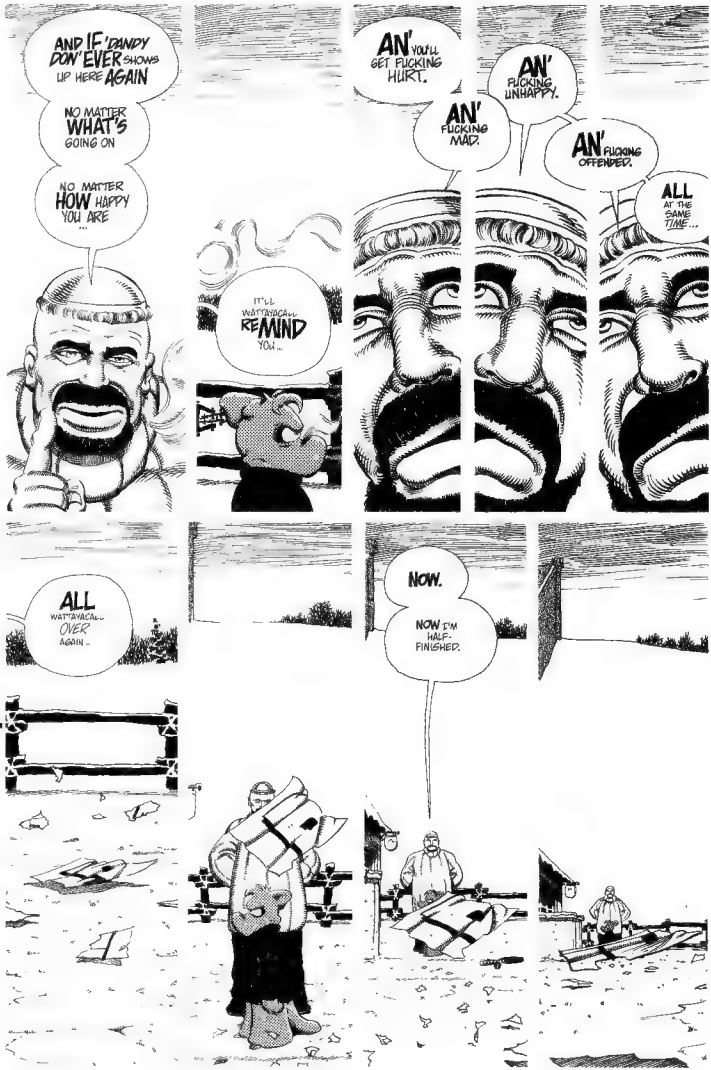
FOR ONCE IN YOUR FUCKING LIFE.
IT JUST WASN'T ENOUGH FOR YOU THAT YOU LIKED.
THAT.
THAT.
WATTYACALL
"GRAPHIC READ"
IT'S NEVER ENOUGH FER YOU THAT YOU WATTYACALL LIKE ANYTHING...
WELL, I DIDN'T LIKE IT...
I LIED.
I THOUGHT IT WUZ FUCKIN' STOOPID.
IZZAT
WATTYACALL
O-KAY WITH YOUZ


SEE?!
IT ISN'T! IT'S NEVER FUCKING WATTAYACALL "O-KAY WITH YOU"
IT'S LIKE-- IT'S LIKE--
EVERYTHING'S FINE AN' THEN SUMBUDDY FUCKIN' SAYS SOMETHIN'
'R SUMBUDDY WATTAYACALL FUCKIN' DOES SOMETHIN'
YER PART-CHICK 'R SOMETHIN'
AN' YER HURT.
AN' YER MAD.
AN' YER UNHAPPY.
AN' YER OFFENDED.
ALL AT THE SAME FUCKING TIME!
"MICK! MICK! READ THIS!"

NO FUCKING "HELLO."
NO FUCKING "HOWZ IT GOIN'?"
"I'M CEREBUS KING SHIT!"
"FUCKING READ THIS"
"FUCKING NOW"
"YEH-- AWRIGHT"
AN' THE ONLY REASON MICK READS IT IS 'CAUSE HE KNOWS
IF HE DON'T READ IT, YOU'LL WATTAYACALL GET MAD-- AN THEN THERE'LL BE NO WATTAYACALL END TO IT.
SO HE READS IT...

HE READS
TO FUCKING.
GET RID OF YOU.
LOOK
CEREBUS ISN'T.
I'M NOT FINISHED!
I'M NOT WATTAYA CALL
HALF FINISHED!
AN' MICK LIKED IT.
SHIT. MICK FUCKING WATTAYACALL LOVED IT.
BUT EVEN THAT'S NOT ENOUGH FOR YOU
FUCK NO.
'CAUSE HE DIDN'T LIKE IT WATTAYACALL YOUR WAY.


SO YER HURT.
AN' YER UNHAPPY.
AN' YER MAD.
AN' YER OFFENDER.
ALL AT TH' SAME FUCKING TIME..
SO WADDA YOU DO?
YOU COME OUT HERE AN' YOU TEAR UP YER 'PANSY P--'
(FUCK NG EXCUSE ME)
YER 'DANDY DON' HAT..
JUST LIKE SOME WATRYACALL
OVERGROWN TWO YEAR OLD


AND IF 'DANDY DON' EVER SHOWS UP HERE AGAIN
NO MATTER WHAT'S GOING ON
NO MATTER HOW HAPPY YOU ARE ...
IT'LL WATTAYACALL... REMIND YOU...
AN' YOU'LL GET FUCKING HURT.
AN' FUCKING MAD.
AN' FUCKING UNHAPPY.
AN' FUCKING OFFENDED.
ALL AT THE SAME TIME...
ALL WATTAYACAL... OVER AGAIN...
NOW.
NOW I'M HALF-FINISHED.

exit Sandman

MY CHAT WITH NEIL

"Did you get my fax?" Neil asked.

I had, indeed, gotten Neil's fax which he had sent from England as his BBC television program neared completion. In the fax, written some weeks (if not months) after he had completed *Sandman,* he observed that he had "just realized that *Sandman* is done," and went on to say some very kind words about me being the "marathon runner" and that he hoped I had enjoyed the company of someone running alongside for eight of the twenty-six years. A very gracious note and one which motivated me to get a little more serious about tracking down the parts of the *Sandman* story missing from the studio library and assemble them into a proper stack of reading material.

"I did get your fax, Neil , and thank you. It *was* very nice having someone running alongside for eight years. . ."

Comedic pause.

". . . I wasn't crazy about the Time-Warner pace car on the other side of you . . ." Neil's basso profundo chortle rolled through the phone line "...but it *was* very nice having *you* running alongside."

Down to business. "Guess what I did last Friday and Saturday?"

"What did you do last Friday and Saturday?" Neil playing straight man.

"I read *Sandman.*"

Straight man vanishes. "The whole thing?"

"Yep."

"Did it work?" The authorial question, the creative question, the thing which separates the reaction of a fellow creator from the reactions of fans and reviewers.

"Yes — and on every level that you intend the question."

Neil was silent. Well, what could he *say?* I was either being excessive out of politeness or subjectively precise. To let it rest as the former would frustrate his curiosity. To pursue the latter would be to "fish for compliments" in a dimension where that would be (at least) outrageously vulgar.

I decide to sidestep for a moment. "So what's the reaction been to *Sandman* ending?"

"Not much," he said simply. In the empty moment, my mind raced across the radio silence which had greeted the conclusion of *High Society, Church & State,* and now *Mothers & Daughters.* Why was I surprised? And yet I was surprised, perhaps because I can never think of the name Neil Gaiman without the honorific "Beloved creator of *Sandman.*" (so perplexed was I that I mentioned the largely non-reaction to an Industry Giant in a recent phone conversation. "Probably because everyone knew it was coming to an end for a long time," was his observation, which further muddified my "fuzzification," in Alan Fotheringham's immortal phrase.) "A number of people have said they really liked issue seventy-five. . ."

Leapfrogging his point: "Is there something wrong with the other seventy-four?"

"Something I've been saying in interviews and which I'm half-serious about: 'I don't know if it's good, but I do know that it's long.'"

We shared a laugh over that one. Bereft of reaction, you can only retreat to the factual lowest common denominator. The conversation pauses over this.

"What do you suppose they're waiting for?" I ask, a mental image of a stadium full of people staring at the spotlit stage after the curtain has come down. "The *Comics Journal* review?"

Neil sighs. "*Probably* the *Comics Journal* review. Which is unfortunate because. . ."

. . . paraphrasing now because our common circumstance supersedes the need for Neil to explain to me what I already know. The Journal*'s political viewpoint as Fantagraphics' house organ dictates that any lengthy work — any REAL graphic novel — must be pilloried (cautiously) so as to maintain the pre-eminence and sanctity of the Fantagraphics creators as the "World's Greatest Cartoonists." My mental image is of Neil and myself chained in the seventh circle of comic-book hell, whipped morning, noon, and night with copies of* A Velvet Glove Cast in Iron.

"I thought about writing a review of *Sandman* for the *Comics Journal,*" I offer. Neil's reaction is impenetrable. The conversation is moving along strange tracks, I realise. I had assumed that mine would be one voice in a large chorus singing the praises of his grand experiment. I now realise we're sitting on our haunches in the middle of a vast wasteland. It occurs to me that even raising the subject of my reviewing *Sandman* with Neil smacks of careerist collusion. I attempt to extricate myself.

"I also thought about writing a review of the *Sandman* artwork."

The waters are less shark-infested, and Neil glides in that direction.

"That would be good, because no one else will do that."

I begin a recitation of mental notes for such a review while simultaneously attempting to interpret what Neil has just said.

Whether consciously or unconsciously, most of *Sandman* is an homage to the Studio guys, beginning with Sam Kieth doing his best Wrightson licks, particularly reminiscent of Wrightson's work on Joe

Orlando's mystery titles, proceeding through Dringenberg's Jeff Jones style, coupled with Malcolm Jones' Jeff Jones inking style, Kelley Jones' Warren-era Wrightson riffs. They — collectively — surmounted the charge of artistic thievery in the same way that Bill Sienkiewicz's work on *Moon Knight* was too good to be called a Neal Adams rip-off. And then, of course, Marc Hempel on *The Kindly Ones*. . .

"You know, I picked Marc Hempel for *The Kindly Ones*; he was the artist I wanted." Neil's the only person I know who can bristle pleasantly.

"It was the 'eye candy' thing," I interjected, using a phrase Steve Bissette had provided when I noted a decline in *Sandman* raves a few issues into the story arc. "If you give them Studio-based stuff for that length of time and then switch to. . ." seeking the seminal point of departure ". . . the Alex Toth viewpoint . . ." I trailed off.

I missed Neil's next few sentences in an introspective moment. I had manufactured an Oscar Wilde-style epigram at the time. Viktor Davis lounging on a sofa: "Of course Neil picked Marc Hempel to draw *The Kindly Ones*, so there'd be one *Sandman* book where no one looked at anything but Neil's *words*. Muh-haw-haw."

In its context, Hempel worked very well — perfectly, in my view. It was the point in the story where the iconography, the characters *as* icons, moved towards the ultimate resolution. Even my *immediate* assessment — that it would have worked better if Marc had started drawing the story at the precise moment where Daniel's mother finds out that Daniel's body has been found— I have reconsidered over the last week or so. It works better to have the switch at the point where Daniel is killed because that really is the point where Dream as Icon begins to shift towards the ultimate resolution.

Although my Viktor Davis *bon mot* had remained in my quiver of literary assassin arrows (so far as I remember — I might have dropped it into a conversation somewhere), I was struck by the contrast between the two assessments: the first, a dispassionate bit of skullduggery conceived by someone who had decided to "sit out" *The Kindly Ones* and read it only when the entire *Sandman* story was done, and the second, the assessment of a satisfied and impressed reader/viewer judging how it worked "in context." What if I had disseminated the first assessment more widely? It might have "stuck" and become just another example of malignant perception superseding serious intent.

Having digressed along the artwork path for some time, I returned to Neil's writing and the really good and the really great moments. I'm actually writing some of this out of order in the interest of keeping myself out of the proceedings, which isn't really possible.

At one point, I explained to Neil what it meant to me to actually read *Sandman* straight through, the reason that I set two days aside for the task, rather than reading the books where and when I found the time. It was the only opportunity I would have to do so — for the next decade or so. To sit down with a real graphic novel (according to my own definition of the term), knowing that I had the whole thing in front of me. Beginning, middle, and end. As I said to Neil, I read both volumes of *Maus* in an afternoon. I read *A Velvet Glove Cast in Iron* in about thirty minutes. In terms of a reading experience, that's very different from a novel — *any* novel. (*Stuck Rubber Baby* raised new and interesting structural questions; though Howard Cruse's magnum opus clocks in at a little under three hundred pages, the density of panels and dialogue stretched it into a "most of a day" consumption category.) I remember thinking (I told him) about halfway through *Sandman*: we shouldn't be allowed to do this. The basso profundo chortle rumbled across the Great Lakes. The quality of immersion — the shoreline you departed from is out of sight behind you and the shoreline of your destination is out of sight ahead of you. . .

I mentioned the fellow's observation in last issue's Aardvark Comment that the purpose of art is to enable the viewer — however briefly — to see the world through the eyes of the artist. With an extended narrative coupled with pictures and issued in instalment form, what we are *doing* to people (I grasped for an analogy) swerves into the darker sides of hypnosis.

"We're the only two who have done this," Neil said.

His voice in my ear suddenly seemed *way* too close and the rest of the world *way, way* too far away.

"*Sandman* is two thousand pages." I think he mistook my silence for exclusion. "*Cerebus*, when it's done..."

"Six thousand pages. . ."

"Wow."

It suddenly seemed a lot more important for me to express my admiration for what he had accomplished. We were teetering on the fence of "nyah-nyah -- my six thousand pages beats your two thousand."

"I started around issue sixty-five of *Cerebus*..."

No, no. "No, that would be 1984; you started *Sandman* in 1987." I began doing the mental math of which issue was out when he began *Sandman*.

"No, no. I began reading *Cerebus* at issue sixty-five. I read *Church & State*, so I knew that a thousand-page comic-book story was possible, and I had an idea of how you could structure it. When you started ... well, it's like Ringo Starr and Paul McCartney and John Lennon and George Harrison

can never know what the Beatles are. You can never read *Cerebus* the same way I can never read *Sandman. . .*"

"It's like Keith Richards saying that he can't compare the Rolling Stones to anything because there was nothing like the Rolling Stones when he was growing up."

"Yes, exactly."

Well, this was too much "me" for a "let's congratulate Neil on *Sandman*" phone call. I attempted to swim back into *Sandman* waters. *This was really the* first *juncture where I thought things had gone off the rails. I have been accused of "name-dropping" by saying "the last time I talked to Neil" or "interesting you should mention that...Neil Gaiman told me..." Well, I am. In terms of overall comic-book-marketplace perception, when you mention the name of a guy — who has won more than his body weight in Eisner and Harvey Awards and whose trade paperbacks dominate the Star System month after month — in that casual a fashion from your marginalised place in the comic-book firmament, you are, irrefutably, "name-dropping." Now, I was being told by the guy that we were in a two-person club.*

Anyway, I attempted to swim back into *Sandman* waters.

The structure worked. I finally experienced what I hear from *Cerebus* fans all the time — "It reads much better in the collected form," "I saw a lot of things I missed in the instalments." Neil's single-issue stories accomplished what I had attempted to do at the conclusion of *High Society*. I only managed the three short pieces in issue 52 and part of "The Countess and the Aardvark" before I got sucked back into a "big book" — *Church & State*. In *Sandman*'s case, the single-issue stories served the purpose Neil intended. "Here's something that I've already shown you, mixed in with what I'm going to show you. It's a distillation, a counterpoint, an allegory, a microcosm, a blueprint, a touchstone, and here's another one and here's another one. NOW. Meanwhile, back at the story..." It also served to introduce a greater variety of drawing styles in a shorter environment to pave the way for the stylistic adjustments that would come later.

"Neil, did you intend to use a variety of artists from the very beginning?"

The phone went dead.

. . . ah, fer the love of, there are times when one rails against the larger awarenesses out there; it was an innocent question, dammit, I'm not going to give him a hard time. I said before the phone call that the Time-Warner pace car was the only "shot" I was going to give him; this is no time for "ethical considerations" as I conceive them. I understand that (mental dateline San Diego '93) the "incident" in the bar, shit, I'd forgotten about that one, no, I wasn't going to bring it up, what do you take me for, anyway?

When Neil and I reconnected, he was quite forthcoming on the subject. I'm not sure how much of what he told me would be considered privileged or sensitive information. I hadn't told him that I intended to "write up" our chat, so I'd prefer to err on the side of caution. A letter arrived from a *Cerebus* fan a few days later which preyed upon my ambivalences here. A malicious little missive it was and tempted me to "have at him" hammer and tongs. Now that I've entered my forties, however, I've considered that a hobby might be just what I need, so I've chosen one: restraint.

Still, I find myself fighting for air some fathoms below the surface of *Sandman* waters. I break the surface of the waters, gasp a lungful of oxygen, and return to my checklist of *bravo, bravo*'s:

- Three women, three women, three women — the recurring motif which surfaces time and again in the story line. One spins, one measures, one cuts it off. The sheer cleverness of incorporating Cain and Abel and the three Witches — Joe Orlando's mystery hosts — into a story line which takes Orlando's groundwork and raises it several plateaus at once, providing DC Universe continuity buffs with a great "continuity fix" while frying much larger thematic fish (as it were). As a long-time fan of such clevernesses, I was very impressed. Three women, three women, three women. Bravo.
- Calliope's imprisonment mirroring Morpheus's own and the fact that she was Orpheus's mother. Missed that one entirely in the instalments, which added another layer of depth to the proceedings. "Calliope" stood alone in my mind as a brilliant short story and allegory, and proved to be a beautifully crafted jigsaw puzzle piece, as well. Bravo.
- "A p-p--point of view. . ." "YOU'VE GIVEN AWAY ANOTHER SECRET." Neil tips his hand and then flashes the tipped hand up on the jumbotron for the entire stadium to see. BRA! VO! Bet they still miss it, is my rueful second thought.
- Ben Johnson as the "author's friend." Neil jumped on that one. Johnson's plays rate much higher in Neil's estimation than is reflected in his portrayal of the author. I understand the squirming ambivalence underlying his admission. The moment brightens when he tells me whom he has based the character on — a mutual acquaintance of whom Neil is a great deal more tolerant than I am. Neil quotes the fellow's words which had triggered the dialogue between Shakespeare and Johnson. I almost drop the phone I'm laughing so hard. Bravo. A well-distilled observation.

Neil has had enough of *Sandman* waters and strikes off towards *Cerebus* territory in mid-checklist. Shit.

"The *Church & State* part. . ."

I swim after him and find he's still bobbing up and down in *Sandman*.

"The 'Cluracan's Tale.' I think I told you that, as I was writing, it suddenly occurred to me that I was trying to write *Church & State* in a single issue . . ."

Yes, yes, yes.

I flash back to when he told me that and how it had . . . unsettled . . . my *Sandman* reading. It seemed to take forever for the issue to come out. And when I read it, of course, all I could see was Neil trying to write *Church & State* in a single issue. How glorious! Neil *failed* at something. Look! I'm holding his failure in my hands! Heeheehee! Competitive malignancy warms our evenings in the comic-book outback.

Of course, in context the story worked perfectly. The word balloons were a bit . . . swollen . . . in places. But, then, you don't have to venture very far into the implications of government and faith housed in a single individual before everything gets a bit...swollen. Neil doubted my reassurance, so I segued back (rather neatly, I thought) to my checklist.

"It's very much like 'Delight' becoming 'Delirium.' It's not as elaborate, but it says a lot of what I was trying to get across in *Mothers & Daughters."* (Some days later, I had the thought that the *real*-world transformation of "Delight" into "Delirium" was the death of Marilyn Monroe.)

I venture cautiously into an extrapolation.

"In fact, I was surprised that you seemed to be saying a *lot* of what I was saying in *Mothers & Daughters*. It's just. . ."

Neil waited, relishing the moment. I laughed.

". . . it's just that you say things so much more *nicely* than I do, Neil."

The basso profundo chortle rolled forth once more.

I should leave it there. What a nice ending to this piece, eh?

No, a little bitterness. A lemon slice in your dessert. Neil mentioned that a common reaction to the end of *Sandman* was that Neil was saying he was the reincarnation of William Shakespeare or that Neil was a latter-day William Shakespeare. I know it well. The literal-minded reading, the carved-in-stone perception that all fiction is autobiography and the role of the reviewer, critic, and reader is to find the hidden keys which unlock the mystery. This is Karen Berger here, and this is Alan Moore, and this is Neil's wife, Mary, and this is. . .

"I used to know why people read novels," Neil said. "And now I don't."

I'll just leave you with that. . . thought.

See? Didn't hurt a bit.

celebration

25 YEARS OF NOW & THEN

Now & Then Books will be celebrating twenty-five years of successful operation on Saturday, October 19, 1996. It is interesting to note that owner/manager Harry Kremer recently celebrated his fiftieth birthday, which means that he has now been running Now & Then Books for as long as he was alive prior to opening the store. Or perhaps it isn't interesting to note that. One way or the other, however, it has been noted.

I think I had already spent a hundred bucks on comics *before* Harry (and his original partner, Bill Johnson) got his business license. Now & Then became my second home, and it wasn't long before I had talked Harry into publishing a fanzine, *The Now & Then Times,* as a vehicle for my fannish ways. Later, I talked him into publishing *Oktoberfest Comics.* Why, if Harry only had all the money that he spent on my harebrained schemes, he could've retired years ago.

Back in those days before the direct market, the comics were clipped onto clotheslines (yes, with real clothespins!), the price of the book written in pencil in the upper left corner of the first page. You only put them in plastic bags (genuine Robert Bell plastic bags) after you bought 'em. Everyone accused Harry of "pulling a Rogofsky" when he displayed a copy of *Fantastic Four* number one for the outrageous sum of $50.00. Who is Rogofsky? You mean, you don't remember Howard Rogofsky? Geez, you kids are going to be the death of me. You don't remember anything before Todd McFarlane. No sense of history. I remember having to go to five different newsstands to make sure I didn't miss an issue. Mint comics? Hah! Good luck. The comics we bought had bends and folds and marks from the wire used to wrap the. . .

Huh?

Oh, sorry.

Ahem.

Anyway, Harry's planning a big party at the store for October 19. Ger and I will be there, and I hope a lot of the rest of you will be there as well for autographs, sketches, reminiscences, and lots of fun all around.

Now & Then Books is located one block from the corner of King and Queen Streets in downtown Kitchener — 90 Queen Street South, as a matter of fact. You can give 'em a call if you need directions at (519)744-5571.

Tell 'em Dave Comic Book sent you. Not Dave Walper or Dave Odeon. Dave Comic Book. They'll know who you mean.

PAGE 45

presents

INDEPENDENTS DAY 96

October 26th 1996

featuring Dave Sim & Gerhard (Cerebus)

and other, yet to be announced guests from the UK and abroad

Page 45, 9 Market Street Nottingham NG1 6HY

(0115) 9508045 fax (0115) 9500950

ok Legal
The Constitution of the United States of America
Amendment I. Article (1)
Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for the redress of grievances.
ANCOUVER

Dave Sim and Peter David "hiding behind the First Amendment" at the Comic Book Legal Defence Fund booth at Defence Con in Oklahoma City. The convention raised a total of $12,000 for the CBLDF (including $1,000 for the original cover to *Cerebus Zero*. Thanks, Barry). photo by C.S. "Chuckie Baby" Thornton